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British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment (review)

Charles W. J. Withers

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sioned and persuasive in discussing objects' capacity to inspire complex thoughts and emotions in those who visit museums. Think of Marcel Proust's *petite madeleine* in *Swann's Way* (Paris, 1912) as an obscure object of intense desire, pregnant with enormous powers of sentimental cognition. Then contrast it with the seventeenth-century project that Arnold himself describes—that of more tight-lipped taxonomists trying to place objects under utilitarian and profitable control rather than to release their various personal meanings. Arnold's account suggests that whereas early modern England's museological *zeitgeist* often expressed itself as anxiety about oddity and multiplicity, we now often recast this anxiety as desire, through the filter of a romantic postmodernism that yearns for a wonder now lost.

James Delbourgo
McGill University

British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment. By Jan Golinski (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2007) 284 pp. \$35.00

In this engagingly written book, Golinski's subject is the widespread attention that the weather received during the Enlightenment in private conversation, diaries, public philosophical discourse, international correspondence, and instrumentation. In Britain, the weather was an ever-present topic of conversation both because of its changeability and because of the view that however variable, Britain's temperate climes reflected, even influenced, the country's largely equable political and economic climate. However understood, either as the focus of systematic study or as a topic consistently evoked in historical and geographical discussion, the weather "was recognized as a material influence on human health and welfare that significantly affected the development of the world's peoples" (xiii). Nonetheless, given its extremes and its unpredictability, the weather refused to succumb to the Enlightenment's bias for rationality and utility.

This book should interest scholars in several different fields. Golinski apprises social and cultural historians, particularly, of the connections between weather, climate, social well-being, and bodily deportment in eighteenth-century Britain. His attention to an anonymous diarist's account of the Great Storm of 1703 will appeal to literary scholars interested in epistolary conventions. His account of how practitioners cultivated a formal language for correspondence about, and the scientific recording of, the weather—a rhetoric of precision, in thermometry and barometry especially—will prove instructive to historical meteorologists.

Historians of science and of technology will benefit from Golinski's engagement with the social context of instrumentation. In this regard, a useful companion volume would be Hasok Chang's discussion of the social and institutional history of chemical thermometry in Enlightenment

London's Royal Society—*Inventing Temperature: Measurement and Scientific Progress* (New York, 2004). As Golinski more than once notes, his book is not primarily a history of meteorology, to which both Vladimir Jankovic, *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather, 1650–1820* (Chicago, 2000), and Katherine Anderson, *Predicting the Weather: Victorians and the Science of Meteorology* (Chicago, 2005), have made significant contributions. But it fits well with their accounts.

Most significantly, Golinski supplements that now more commonplace view of Enlightenment history not as the preserve of urbane *philosophes* debating among themselves but as a social history of lived experiences and quotidian practices. Precisely because of this excellent study of weather and of climate in the Enlightenment, the forecast for Enlightenment studies in general is now brighter.

Charles W. J. Withers
University of Edinburgh

At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World. Edited by Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006) 338 pp. \$75.00 cloth \$29.99 paper

One aspect of the “new imperial history” has been an emphasis on reciprocal relationships between Britain and its overseas empire—on seeing colonies as major contributors to changes in British culture and society, not just recipients of British influences. Some historians of empire have disparaged this tendency, citing evidence that the preponderance of influence flowed outward from the metropole. Either way, the issue reflects the peculiar “balance of empire” formulation of interpretive questions that for many years dominated imperial historiography and that derived mainly from ideological debates about colonialism.

The book under review is a fascinating, somewhat disorderly, but largely successful contribution to an effort not only to argue for reciprocal influence but also to change radically the terms in which the colonial relationship is understood. Its primary objective is the partial dissolution of the conceptual boundary between “home” and “empire” on which most interpretations of modern colonialism have depended. It explores a wide range of ways in which colonial elements were embedded in British domestic contexts between the late eighteenth and late twentieth centuries.

The contributions are many and varied. Some of them deal with the construction of the categorical distinction between colony and metropole. Hall's essay shows Thomas Babington Macaulay at work on it in his *History of England* (London, 1848), although the discussion is incomplete because it does not cover Macaulay's close involvement with India and with colonial issues generally. Hall's forthcoming book may have more to say on the subject.